

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A filter arrangement for a liquid comprising a filter element, which during installation in the filter arrangement is axially inserted into a filter housing, wherein after installation the filter element seals a back flow device at least for the liquid to be filtered with at least one seal in front of a return flow channel, wherein the back flow device is configured in such a way that when the filter element is being axially withdrawn from the housing, a first seal is initially released to enable return flow of unfiltered liquid, and as the withdrawal of the filter element continues, a second seal is released to enable return flow of filtered liquid.

2. A filter arrangement according to claim 1, wherein the first seal is arranged on the filter element in such a way that it fits sealingly against a housing wall within a predefined axial range of motion and wherein the second seal is arranged on the filter element in such a way that it fits sealingly against an axially extending housing wall within a predefined range of motion, wherein the range of motion for the second seal is longer than the range of motion of the first seal.

3. A filter arrangement according to claim 2, wherein the first range of motion is defined by an axial projection against which the first seal fits within the housing between an inlet for the liquid to be filtered and the return flow channel.

4. A filter arrangement according to claim 2, wherein the first range of motion is defined by a first seal ring that fits against an axially extending projection within the housing between an inlet for the liquid to be filtered and the return flow channel.

5. A filter arrangement according to claim 2, wherein the first range of motion is defined by a seal member located axially between the filter element and a housing floor, and wherein said seal member extends radially to said axially extending housing wall to define the second range of motion.

6. A filter arrangement according to claim 2, wherein the first seal extends radially outwardly beyond a radial edge of the filter element to form a membrane surface in front

of an inlet for unfiltered liquid, so that back flow of the unfiltered liquid is partially blocked.

7. A filter arrangement according to claim 6, wherein said membrane surface cooperates with a stop surface on the housing to partially block back flow of the unfiltered liquid.

8. A filter arrangement according to claim 1, wherein the liquid to be filtered is a fuel or a lubricant for an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle.